A

Copy of letter of J. G. Sharp.

Terra Cotta, Ont., Nov. 16th, 1931.

W. P. Bull Esq.

Toronto.

Dear Sir:-

Replying to your letter of recent date regarding a History of the County of Peel I can only say that the material at my command is very local in its scope and refers practically to the South corner of Caledon Township only.

The history of this vicinity, familiarly knownas Rockside, (no doubt named from the amount of rock in evidence) may be said to have commenced in the Spring of 1820, when one John McDonald of the Parish of Loch-winnock, Scotland, his wife Margaret Gibson and a large grown up family, together with numerous relatives and others arrived after an arduous tramp through the woods from the village of York. I have been told that the party on leaving Scotland numbered some seventy souls but after the six weeks ocean voyage and a further two weeks up the St. Lawrence in what was known as Durham boats a number left the party at Brockville and located in the Township of Crosby. A further (?) defection took place at Kingston, and the remainder in due course arrived at York. The Crown Lands Agent then seeing an excellent chance of showing the frontier of settlement yer farther back, suggested Caledon as a good location inasmuch as the party desired to locate together, as early in the season the immigrants found

themselves at their land of promise. What their thoughts were on arriving in such a succession of rock, hill and swamp, we can only imagine, no doubt they were various according to the individual. However there was no turning back and John McDonald Se. who might have been called the Patriarch, selected as his home Lot 1 in the 6th Concession W. now occupied by G. S. Kirkwood and John Smith, while the rest of the party took up locations in the near vicinity. In the absence of a complete list of these first arrivals it is impossible to give a full account of their locations at this date, suffice it to say that then or within a few years at most there appear in addition to the Clan McDonald such names as Gibson, Kirkwood, McLaren, Crichton, Patullo, McLachlan, McArthur, McDougall, Smith, Brown, Sinclair et al, and later Hunter, Walker, Frank, Rowan, Young, McNaughton, McLean, Campbell, McEachern. Some of these were U. E. Loyalist stock and were a very valuable acquisition to the neighbourhood in being experienced woodsmen. They taught the rest how to hunt deer and bear and to dress and tan their skins. How to dry meat and fish, the latter being at that time very plentiful especially speckled trout, and even salmon were said to come up the Credit as far as Salmonville (now Terra Cotta). The women also instructed their immigrant sisters in making bread by hop or salt rising, how to make soft soap, and of

course the exact phase of the moon in which th plant peas, beans, corn and such like so as to produce the best results.

pioneer life

At first all suplies had to be brought in from York, Dundas or Ancaster all of them more than forty miles distant and even the women took part in these arduous journeys, carrying their butter &c or maple sugar as the case might be on their back, and returning with necessities of at least equal weight. Apropos of this I may say that a lady recently told me of her grandmother carrying a logging chain as her return cargo, the full forty miles from York. Surely these women were fit to rank with Packman's "lioness-like mothers" of the West.

The first working oxen were brought into the settlement by Michael Bake - a mighty nimrod by the way,- who left a record of thirteen bear killed in one autumn. Wolves were also plentiful, and a bounty was given for killing them as early as 1833 but it was not till this bounty was given to the Indians also that they were finally exterminated. Two of our "oldest inhabitants" can still remember the Red men as they made their periodical visits to the settlement, always being on the best of terms with the pioneers.

The first grist mill "above the mountain" was erected at what is now the village of Belfountain, by the Franks and was afterwards operated by a Mr. McCurdy, a name still perpetuated in McCurdy St. in said village.

Belfountain was originally named "Tubtown" from an octagonal building erected by Archibald McNaughton and there are yet old timers who affectionately prefer the later name.

At first the settlers held religious services in some central home, when a Sermon would be read, and other exercises engaged in, afterwards an itinerant preacher would give a service once a month often walking the entire distance from Towonto Township or elsewhere to do so, then in 1831 a Presbyterian congregation was organized, the service being held in the School house and the Minister - the Rev. Duncan McMillan - who also preached at Caledon East, a congregation being established there in the same year. In 1837 the present church building was erected, and the same has been in continuous use ever since, being newly decorated only last year. It stands on Lot 3 on the 4th Line West and is widely known as the "Old White Church".

Surrounding it the cemetery contains the dust of many of the original settlers, and it is still revisited by their descendents who reverence it as Holy Ground.

The School house before mentioned did duty until 1846 when a new one was erected on the 5th Line Lot 3. Up to this date it was customary for each scholar to bring a bunch of quills for the teacher to make into pens. The first teacher was Gilbert Rowan, Mrs. Rowan his wife had taken a course of training in nursing &c

in the old land, and was consequently in demand over a wide area, the only person with medical training an Angel of Mercy to many a poor settler.

The year 1837 is remembered as the year of "The Rebellion". In this part of Caledon the great majority sympathized with the McKenzie movement although few actually engaged in the act of rebellion, but when the Sedentary Militia was called out most of them failed to respond. Such however as did assemble at the point of rendezvous were finally peacefully sent home, their services not being required.

Up to the building of the Grand Trunk Railway most of the grain from this locality had to be teamed to Port Credit, Bronte or Oakville, and as there was an hotel about every five lots, it is marvellous, considering the custom of the times, that any actual cash ever got homefor the wife and bairns at all. However, eventually temperance sentiment crystallized into the establishing of A Sons of Temperance Lodge at Rockside which up to some fifty years since was one of the social events of the week.

The first Township Meeting held in Caledon was in Jany. 1825 at the house of Mathew Crooks Lot 14 con. west whereat a constable - Thos. Bell - was appointed with Stephen Wilcox Assessor for the west side and Elisha Tarbox for the East, also John Crichton Collector of Taxes.

From a letter from J. F. Hunter 25th Aug. 1933

1419 9th St. West

Calgary, Alta.

Down below Rockside there was the "Dark Corner" of which we as youngsters heard gruesome stories of wild-cats screaming at night in the trees ready to pounce on the belated traveller. I never heard of anybody being hurt or even seeing a wild-cat there. There was a double road there and often there was a test there who had the fastest horses although they could not see each other during the race, on account of the cedar trees between.

ROCKSIDE

a post village of the township of Caledon, county of Peel, 16 miles from Brampton and 42 from Toronto. The post office was first established in 1864, David Kirkwood, the present offici being the first postmaster appointed. Village contains a common school and Temperance Scoeity. Mails Tuesday and Fridays. Pop. 40.

March, 1870.

Castle.

News of the Churches.

Wednesday was spent in travelling and visiting several families, on the way to Alton, and, a heavy snow storm prevailing, we were kindly received by the parents of Bro. John Borwn, whose hospitable roof we left next morning. Not far off, an unexpected sight delighted us-- a castellated structure, among the trees of a Canadian forest. From the massive tower, fifty-nine feet high, of "Rockside Castle", we were gratified by the courtesy of the owner, with one of the finest views in Ontario, and indulged in pleasant reminiscences, concerning some old, secluded mansions in beloved England and Scotland.